

DEMONSTRATED SURVIVAL: ITS INFLUENCE ON SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

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FOREWORD

This is one of a series of five booklets, viz. :—

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by Helen A. Dallas.
2. THE MENTAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM,
by Rev. C. Drayton Thomas.
3. THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM,
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M.A., M.D., M.R.C.P.
5. DEMONSTRATED SURVIVAL : ITS INFLUENCE
ON SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION,
by Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S.*

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DEMONSTRATED SURVIVAL: ITS INFLUENCE ON SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

VAGUELY and indefinitely the idea of individual human survival has always been before the mind of the race. It seems to correspond with natural instincts, and is associated in one form or another with most religions. But in science the idea has never taken root : it has been regarded as belonging to the more mystical and imaginative side of things appropriate to Art and Literature, but not in consonance with the hard facts of bodily experience which form the substratum of sensory perception, and constitute the territory open to scientific exploration. There has never been wanting a group of scientific men who have held that the life of the body is so intimately associated with the right working of the brain, the heart, and the other organs—our minds so dependent on what we apprehend through the senses—that the idea of an animating principle able to function apart from those organs is to them unthinkable. They do not deny the fact of consciousness and reasoning power, for they continually make use of those powers themselves ; but they consider that thought is a function of the brain, they endeavour not to go beyond what they can explore with their microscopes and other instruments, and decline to enter an intangible or mystical region where they would lose that firm foothold essential to their studies.

Demonstrated Survival

This group wants to deal, not with metaphysical abstractions or hypothetical entities which cannot be brought to book, but with the visible, the tangible, and the concrete. That region they have made their particular province, and it is so extensive and satisfying that they usually feel no need for any other point of view. They would say, not that a psychical entity needs some physical means of manifestation—which I think is probably true—but they would say that a psychical entity has no meaning apart from a physico-chemical process. This process they try to follow into intimate detail, they regard it enthusiastically as all sufficient, and conjecture that what appears as vitality and consciousness is a mere outcome, or evanescent and even illusory product, of those material processes themselves.

Religious ideas about survival therefore, like ideas about Deity or a Supreme Being responsible for the universe, they would relegate to another domain of thought. They might treat it with distant respect, because they cannot but be influenced by ordinary human aspirations and affections, but they would regard those ideas, so far as science is concerned, as having no particular meaning, for such ideas are not open to metrical formulation or scientific scrutiny. Transcendental inspiration or aspiration does not seem to come within the province of "natural knowledge," for the improvement of which the Royal Society was founded about three centuries ago. By limiting their field to the concrete and the measurable, scientific workers have reduced the universe of reality to a manageable

Introductory

amount of complexity, and thereby have been enabled to make immense progress. They have learnt a great deal about the different forms of matter and the material basis of everything, including the various forms and behaviour of living organisms. Biologists know a vast amount about these things.

Some of us feel to be getting an understanding of the inorganic operations connected with the stars and atoms throughout the cosmos, as well as with the organic occurrences on this planet alone; and the orthodox methods of discovery have triumphed, until science has grown to an extent beyond the utmost hopes of the Founders of the Royal Society, and far beyond the apprehension of the great mass of mankind. In elaborating this body of concrete knowledge the workers have shown great patience and ingenuity, and have striven hard for the truth. The field open to their exploration is so large and diversified that they wish for nothing more. The lifetime of many generations may well be devoted to a further exploration of the universe on these limited lines. Even the material aspect of the universe appears to be infinite: knowledge about it continually increases, and shows no signs of reaching a limit. The more we know, the more we perceive there is to know: we are in touch even in this region with a kind of satisfying infinity.

But men of business, men of letters, artists, theologians, professional and educated men generally, have trained their faculties in other directions. They know, as a rule, very little about the discoveries of science: they work in another region.

where human considerations are supreme, and where other aspects of the universe, from commercial enterprise and the pursuit of pleasure, up to those loftier aims which we may briefly summarise under the words Faith, Hope and Charity, are equally real and still more satisfying to the human spirit.

The fact is, I venture to say, that the universe is infinite in many different ways. In every direction we can make progress ; in no direction do we see any limit to reality. Judging by the various activities of mankind even on this small planet, we may surmise that the universe is infinite in an infinite number of ways ; and the superhuman task of the philosopher is to seek to correlate the different aspects of reality, and trace a comprehensive unity running through them all. I call such a task "superhuman," because the human mind cannot really grasp infinity, and no philosopher can hope to be able to contemplate, still less formulate, the whole. We have to proceed in a simpler manner, dealing with special instances and specific kinds of evidence, and so gradually enlarge our ideas until the domain open to contemplation is encroached upon step by step and so quietly annexed. We have to cultivate a reverence for fact, however apparently insignificant it may be, and proceed in faith that, as we gradually grasp more and more of the pattern, we shall find that all the facts fit into their place, and become more and more intelligible as knowledge advances.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF DEMONSTRATED SURVIVAL ON SCIENCE.

APPLYING these general considerations to the problem of human survival, we realise that, as in the early days of electricity, the evidence for it seems often of an insignificant and trivial kind. That is what often happens in the early stages of a subject. The facts adduced seem hardly worthy of attention and yet if they are accepted and followed up, they lead to immense developments unimaginable beforehand. A thumb-print is a trifle, it may be thought of as a mere smudge; yet it is no trifle to the criminal when submitted to expert scrutiny. No fact, however trivial, is insignificant. The pioneers of electrical science attended to the levitation of light bodies, the twitching of muscles, and the production of little sparks: they could not have had the faintest conception of the development of electrical engineering, and the use of electricity for the service of man. Still less could they remotely imagine the astonishing revelation of the electrical structure of matter as the basis of all material existence, which has been the achievement of our own day.

We have found, or are finding, that the properties of matter are secondary to the properties of empty space, that matter is only the index or sign of what is occurring elsewhere, and that the behaviour of material bodies is due to something which acts upon them from the insensible regions of space, and forms a link or means of communication between

otherwise isolated particles. The movements of the planets—that is their deflected movements, their curvature in orbits round a central body—are produced, we now learn, by the properties of the space in which they move. The light which brings us information has long been known to come insensibly through that space, and to be only displayed by matter when it arrives. Similarly every atom is moving in a vacuum, and all the intricate complexity of its movements are due to something received from space. We learn of the existence of light by its effect on matter. We learn of the existence of an electric current by its deflection of a compass-needle. We study a magnetic field in empty space by means of the pieces of iron upon which it acts. And so also it may be said we study the properties of life and mind by familiarity with the material vehicles or animated bodies which come within our powers of observation. What the biologists are studying is the material basis of life. In that study they are expert, and it may be safely left in their hands. They can see the cells of the body or of a live tissue in action, and can tell us what they are doing. They study the behaviour of tissues in health and disease, and can map out the whole material scheme, if not as yet completely—they would hardly claim that—yet to a growing extent which shows they are on right lines.

But the nature of life is unknown even to them. They perceive that animated matter behaves differently from inert or dead matter. They find that it is constituted of the same atoms and obeys the same laws of physics and chemistry as the inert

variety, but that there is something superadded, which causes animated bodies to move in an apparently purposive manner, as if their movements were directed towards some aim or object, as yet unrealised but dimly foreseen. Instinctive the action may be, but it is controlled by an apprehension of the future, though certainly transmitted to the particles by a stimulus in the present. All matter is subject to the laws of energy, and the amount of energy appears to be fixed, but by animated existence it is guided or controlled so as to produce results that otherwise would not occur. A bird builds a nest in instinctive anticipation of future offspring. Bees instinctively store honey in preparation for a winter dearth. An insect about to die selects a spot where food will be provided for its larvæ when presently hatched from the egg. The instances of apparent or instinctive foresight in the animal kingdom, down to the minutest creature, are too numerous to mention. And the instances told us about their provident habits are not only instructive but surprising. Inert matter does none of these things. There is evidently something—some animating principle—that co-operates with and manages matter so as to produce these strange results. That “something,” which for brevity we may call “life,” and which only after a long course of evolution blossoms into conscious “mind,” exists we know not how and we know not where; we only recognise it in association with matter.

But then there are so many things in space which we only thus recognise. We only recognise light

and magnetism in association with matter. Apart from the eye, light is nothing but an etheric quiver, of which apart from a special organ we should know nothing. It is through matter that we become aware of all the various energies of nature. But the matter is not responsible for them ; the energies are not due to matter, they are only known to us when they interact with it. Material instruments enable us to detect what is going on in their neighbourhood, as when the swelling of mercury in a thermometer testifies to rise of temperature, or when a glowing filament or a deflected needle testifies to an electric current.

Can magnetism exist apart from matter? Undoubtedly it can. Only it can then make no sign. We do not know of a magnetic field by direct observation, through a direct appeal to our senses : we infer it from the way matter behaves. All operative or controlling existence is in space. Undirected matter is quite inert.

Hence to a physicist it seems no strange thing to think of a guiding and directing principle like life as something which exists in space too, and which may interact with and utilise matter for a time. The material basis of life attracts our attention. The animated organism is our proper field of study. But whether life itself, when separated from the organism, continues in any sense to exist, is a problem about which we have to use our reasoning power. We could hardly hope to be favoured by direct demonstration.

MEDIUMSHIP.

It so happens, however, that at the higher levels, when life has blossomed into mind, and when the living organism has become an individual, with a character and personality such as we are familiar with in our own consciousness, the question takes a different form. For a personal mind, if it still persists, may be able to make some conscious demonstration. By utilising some of the forms of matter with which it was familiar, the brain-nerve-muscle system of another human being for instance, it may be able to affect our senses, and so inform us that that same personality still survives, though normally in a condition beyond our ordinary ken.

Needless to say, there is a vast amount of evidence that that kind of demonstration has already been given ; and many of those who have studied the subject are now ready to testify that it is a reality. They assure us that conscious mind does not cease with the death of the physical organ, that mind is not put out of existence when the brain is damaged, but that only its manifestation is interfered with, so that no longer can it furnish the usual sign or index of its existence. It has lost its own material vehicle, and has to take other and less usual methods of attracting our attention.

Well, the evidence must be scrutinised, and must be able to stand criticism before it can be raised to the dignity of proof. But suppose it attained proof, what then ? Some think it has risen to the level of proof already, and that where an individual character has been formed it is able, under certain conditions

III. INFLUENCE ON PHILOSOPHY.

A DEMONSTRATION of the survival of human personality will surely influence philosophy, or that branch of philosophy termed metaphysics, which seeks to probe into the fundamental nature of things, and to understand the connexion between mind and matter. We shall learn, in all probability, that, by attending to matter alone, and to those manifestations of mind which are displayed only through the brain and organs associated with it, we shall not be able to solve the riddle of the universe or to trace the fundamental nature of that interaction. Philosophers must take a lesson from the physicist, and attend more to the properties of space. They are already beginning to do so in many directions. They realise that physicists and astronomers have something to say, and many of them have striven with some success to understand the significance of the newer utterances.

But they must be impelled to go further than the physicist has yet gone, and look in the same direction for the solution of problems about life and mind. They may have to admit that these entities always have a physical, though not a material basis, and that by a study of that physical or etheric or spatial basis, they may hope to get further light upon the interaction between mind and matter. If life needs a physical basis, and if life is perpetual, not dependent upon a specific material organism, and still in existence apart from matter, then, although the problems raised are innumerable and difficult,

they are becoming more hopeful of solution, and more tractable, as we follow up the clue.

If the facts are not so, then we must find that out. But if they are so, that is if survival of human beings is actually demonstrated, then, like any other fact, it is vastly important, and must be taken into account by every philosopher who seeks to unify the universe in its widest and most comprehensive aspect. If life of any kind persists apart from the body, the whole nature of life needs reconsideration. It would seem to be something transcendental and permanent, like the ether of space, not transitory and evanescent, like everything afflicted with the imperfections of matter. It is turning out to be easier to investigate life at its higher stages, when it has become conscious and able to bear testimony ; but the information so acquired can be utilised and extended, with due limitations, to a study of life in its more lowly stages of development.

A philosopher is one who takes all knowledge under his supervision, if not as an individual, then as a group, and no fact can be outside his scope. He must make sure that it is a fact, and then be thankful that he has found something which has hitherto eluded his system, and which may possibly contain the key to the whole. Let us see what sort of testimony has so far been obtained.

TESTIMONY.

THE testimony so far obtained, or purporting to be obtained, from departed human beings, is to the effect that memory continues after bodily death ; for reminiscences are employed as one means of

proving identity. This, if accepted, shows that memory does not effectively reside in the brain, although habitual usage of certain nerve tracts no doubt makes recovery of memory more easy than when the material instrument has been lost. Habits may be weakened by that loss, but memory need not be impaired. We find that incidents that have made an impression on the mind of deceased personalities are remembered, and can be recalled under proper stimulus.

Intellect continues also. Literary quotations are often ingeniously applied, so as to convey information in a curious, characteristic, and evidential manner. Aptitudes for learning and for artistic production seem also to continue. Innate, and probably also acquired, faculties and tastes belong to the individual, and are retained. Indeed, the evidence is that the whole personality survives, with a character and power similar to those displayed by the old bodily organism. Above all, family affection continues strong ; the desire to help friends and relatives is perhaps the most prominent feature, and indeed often constitutes the motive power that stimulates the effort to communicate.

A wider knowledge, especially a keener apprehension of the future, is sometimes shown, though the knowledge in general remains subject to human limitations, and only in a few (sometimes unexpected) directions does it exceed our own in quality. Those on the other side the veil say that they progress in higher knowledge ; but apparently that higher knowledge, acquired out of contact with earth, seems but little accessible to them when they

make the effort to resume material conditions in order to have communion with us. They seem, then, partially dazed by temporary re-incarnation—if their momentary return to a material body may be so called. The brain is an inhibiting or screening organ, and so it is that when they again try to use a brain they feel a strain, and make lapses from which in their normal state they may be free. Even so, they see further than we can, they possess what we call clairvoyance, they are not so subject to the limitations of space and time as we are. They sometimes make an effort to tell us about their surroundings, but we have no means of verifying the information given ; its general tenor is that their power of interpreting the universe has remained unaltered, or but little changed, and that accordingly their environment appeals to them under much the same guise, and with the same general kind of appearance, as that with which they had been familiar here. After all they are still in the same universe; and although the universe is most profoundly comprehensive, so that it can be regarded in a multitude of ways, it is unlikely that a human being, either here or there, can as yet apprehend any but the human aspect, the one with which our senses have made us familiar, and which is real and true as far as it goes.

So far, then, as their own present conditions are concerned, they testify that there are many grades of existence ; they are not all in one place or in one state. The vicious are not with them ; nor presumably are the saints constantly accessible. There is, so to speak, plenty of room, and each appears to enter the state or condition for which he is fitted.

Influence on Philosophy

Diversity of tastes, diversity of interests, of power and of intelligence, still exist, just as they do down here. And there is a sorting out process, probably more complete than it is here, whereby we associate mainly with those of our own kind. Those who frequently communicate with us are evidently happy, amid gracious surroundings, surrounded by beauty like that of terrestrial landscapes, and under conditions which do not feel strange or unnatural. So uniform is this testimony that I have imagined that perhaps they see the etheric aspect of the very things of which we see the material aspect.

Whatever the explanation, they certainly tell us that they are in a state where they can feel at home, can keep in touch for a time with those they loved on earth, can be of service in many ways ; and, though they see opportunities of progress ahead, they are well satisfied to bide their time, and do their duty in that state of life to which they have been called. They are not suddenly transmuted into beings of another order. They remain themselves ; and changes, like all changes in the universe, are gradual. Five minutes after death, as the Bishop of London has said, they are much the same as they were five before, except that they are rid of the burden of the flesh.*

* I want to express profound agreement with what the learned Canon of the Anglican Church Dr. R. H. Charles appears to have said in Westminster Abbey recently, as reported in "THE TIMES" (Monday, July 1st, 1929). His conclusions, so far as they go, appear to be the same as my own, though reached by a quite different avenue of approach.

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It is difficult to realise what it all means, but they certainly say that they have music, that they can paint, that they can carry on their studies. Literature is somehow not closed to them, they do not seem deprived of any of the intellectual pleasures which they enjoyed here. It seems that we are never too old to learn, and to enlarge our powers of appreciation; all knowledge, powers, and aptitudes, are a permanent benefit. The next world—a personal and subjective phrase—seems to be very much what we make it. We seem to be building our future surroundings in terms of character here. As Canon Rendall has expressed it, we must “win our souls.” Those who attend only to themselves will have only themselves to attend to: those who have cultivated wide sympathies and have been of service to their brethren will find their joy and scope in service enlarged and exalted. In brief, most of the departed rejoice at the condition they find waiting for them, and are happy and content.

They do indeed occasionally testify that there are far higher beings in existence, and that they themselves are in the course of progressing towards higher states. They also claim that from time to time they can inspire those left behind, and help them to achieve results, to gain ideas, to make discoveries; and that to this power we owe much of value that comes through what we call genius. Although this kind of service may continue for a long time, they suggest that ultimately they will probably lose touch with the earth, and, save in exceptional circumstances, will soar too high for communication, and gradually get out of touch with

that branch of the human family still on earth.

The exceptions, however, are profoundly important. For, however high the personality progresses, it is always possible to descend for a good object, and even to suffer humiliation for the sake of those struggling amid difficulties and temptations below. They speak with the utmost reverence of One such Being who actually took flesh and dwelt among us for a time, in order to give us truer apprehension of the nature of the Godhead and to assure us of the loving kindness which lies at the heart of everything. Our free co-operation, and even our assistance in the task of raising the divinely-endowed uncoerced part of creation to a perception of its possible destiny, is earnestly desired; and we are asked to realise that there is a guiding beneficent Power which works with us, without interfering with our freedom, and stimulates us to strive after the highest and the best.

All this and much more testimony about conditions on the other side will be available as soon as the facts of survival of individual character and personality are effectively admitted as true. As a matter of fact, many bereaved people already take comfort in the reception of clear and characteristic messages from their loved ones. The veil is wearing thin, and we are beginning to realise that the separation into two states or conditions of being is an artificial separation, due mainly to the limitation of our animal senses, and that a unity, a continuity, dominates the whole. We are welded together in the bonds of love, as the heavenly bodies are welded together by the uniting bonds of

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gravitation, and as separate atoms are grouped into solids and held together by the ether of space. There need be no isolation, no bewilderment, the universe is more perfect than has yet been conceived, even by our poets, and the enlargement of conception gained by emancipation from the material body leads to yet keener appreciation of the grandeur and beauty of existence. Truly there is much for the philosopher to learn.

IV. INFLUENCE ON RELIGION.

AND now what will be the effect upon religion of a demonstrated case of survival, or rather, not of an individual case, for that would always be doubtful, but of the demonstration that human beings, with their full character and personality, survive the death of the body, and continue in another, certainly psychical, perhaps physical but immaterial, order of existence ?

It may be said that the information just now briefly summarized about the conditions of permanent existence has already a bearing on religion. Undoubtedly it has, but it is the result of more than the demonstration of survival, it represents information obtained from those who have survived ; and as long as their survival itself is in doubt it is not available for use. Moreover, religious people are not likely to welcome a channel of information of a secular kind. Each ecclesiastical body has its own system complete and satisfactory. Truth is divided up into sectional compartments, presumably for greater ease of apprehension, so that a part often seems of more value than the whole. And the party walls are well safeguarded, only a few here and there are permeable. Permeability is generally regarded as dangerous, because liable to a leakage or inlet of heresy.

Creedal systems no doubt have their uses and enshrine a good deal of truth. Rigidity and exclusiveness are their weakness ; or, as some would say, their strength. Sectarian differences,

even though they sometimes fall to the level of sectarian animosity, are usually based on little more than official procedure and professional etiquette ; they are not essential to religion of a broader and more personal kind.

By religion here we mean the reaction of an intelligent person, not exactly to the universe as a whole, for that would be philosophy, but to the highest conception which the person has been able to form concerning the meaning and cause of existence. If he has been touched by religion at all, he has presumably formed some conception of a Being who understands and controls the working of everything that he can perceive or imagine, and towards the fulfilment of Whose will, so far as he understands it, he desires to regulate his life.

A person who chose to assume that the universe was irrational, without aim or object, merely a random dance of atoms under the influence of purely chemical and physical forces, might resent the idea of religion as having any meaning or significance for him. I think, however, that such people are extremely rare, and that the most consistent materialist is willing to admit that there is an unknown and possibly unknowable mystery surrounding existence, of which he stands in some awe, without presuming to formulate any idea of the nature of that mystery. This is the genuinely agnostic position. Agnosticism, seriously held, may be regarded as a religion ; and many there are who, in spite of a rather dismal outlook and a temptation to pessimism, are willing to adapt their lives to the supposed conditions, and to do the best

they can, in an exemplary manner, both for themselves and for their fellows in like case. If so, then agnosticism is a practical as well as a theoretical point of view, and constitutes the religion of the person who holds it.

But, whereas a theologian may possess a fully-developed system which satisfies him completely, so that he feels disinclined to welcome any information beyond what he already has attained, an agnostic surely ought to welcome any further information, provided it is of a trustworthy kind, and amend his admitted ignorance by gradual accretions of positive knowledge, whatever the consequences. The doubter should be more open-minded than the fully-satisfied Gnostic. The majority of people, of course, do not belong to either extreme. All are doubters to some extent, and all have aspirations towards something higher and better than themselves. The appreciation of goodness and of law and order is universal. Hence practically some form of religion is common to all mankind. The question, therefore, is what bearing a demonstration of human survival beyond the material body would have upon religion in this wide and comprehensive sense.

First, it would show that life is not limited to its material forms of manifestation, that it is more than a mere function of animated matter, and that its explanation is to be sought in a region outside that matter. That, however, in so far as it is justified, would be primarily a scientific conclusion, for it would show that the brain and other organs of the

body have not the last word in the interpretation of mind and consciousness. It would show that psychic entities can exist and can continue, apart from the instruments which demonstrate them to the senses ; and this discovery would have a bearing on any system of philosophy which might then be in vogue. Such a system would tend to open the mind to an enlarged view of the universe, and would lead to the inclusion of mental and spiritual realities apart from matter, and possibly existing in space. If the animating principle that we are aware of in ourselves has a permanent existence, and if that animating principle is individualized so that our personalities continue, the door is open to the conception of other intelligences higher than our own, which may likewise exist. For no reason can be assigned why we or any other of the organisms on earth should be the highest that can exist anywhere. Those who have lived on the earth in the past, if in any sense they continue, need surely not have been stagnant and unprogressive. The process of evolution that has brought us thus far may carry us on much farther. Time is of the essence of the process of evolution ; and in the lapse of time those who once made use of the properties of terrestrial matter for their initial development as individuals may have progressed to heights to us unthinkable, and may have come into communion with other lofty spirits whose development was not terrestrial at all.

In other words, the demonstration of the survival of the human spirit would, when accomplished, establish the existence of a spiritual world ; that is

to say, of an order of beings in the universe, inaccessible to the senses, and beyond our present experience or apprehension. Our own hopes and aspirations would then be regarded as a faint indication or incipient example of something far more deeply embedded in the nature of things, "a presence far more deeply interfused," which may lead us in the last resort to surpass our present attainment as far as that surpasses the attainment of the lowest forms of life. Once take the initial step, and there is no limit. Continuity reigns, and we are quite unlikely to come to a boundary or to some ideal condition beyond which there is nothing. The spiritual world, once admitted, may rationally be thought of as extending to infinity. There is no limit or boundary to the material universe. The same system of law and order holds throughout. And if spirit and matter are inter-related, so that all that we can observe is a sign of something dominating and inter-acting and giving partial indications of a great Reality, then the whole may be suffused with an intelligence and a meaning beyond anything that we can conceive. The only limit to conception is imposed by our finite minds, and the highest conception of reality which at any period we have been able to form is what we designate by the term "God."

That term, too, has evolved. "The thoughts of men have widened with the process of the suns." The attributes assigned to that term have changed from time to time in accordance with human development. The term as we use it means the highest that we are able to conceive, and we may

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rest assured that the reality is far beyond our utmost imagination.

Humanity in its religious efforts has striven towards this ideal, with many limitations and imperfections, and has only gone a little way on the journey. But it has felt justified in extending its own ideas of goodness, beauty, and truth, has realized that after all they are parts of the universe, and that raised to a higher power they must be attributes of the loftiest Being of and through whom the whole universe exists. The existence of a spiritual world is the preamble of all religions, and realization of that existence will be a rational consequence of demonstrated survival.

Of course religion has gone further. It looks to the inspiration of saint and prophet for help and guidance among the uncertainties and difficulties of earth-life. It seeks to worship at the shrine of the Holy. Christianity assumes that a specially lofty Being has interacted with matter, and has demonstrated by means of a material body some of the divine attributes, so as to bring them within human cognizance. Thus it is claimed that in spite of all appearances love is the dominant feature, that the whole process of evolution is guided by a beneficent fatherly purpose, that we are living in the midst of an infinitely complex and beneficent reality, to which there is neither beginning nor end.

If we ask what influence demonstrated survival may have upon conduct, we are entering the field of ethics, and each must judge for himself what the effect would be if he knew for certain that his own personality, his own character, would continue, that

there was no getting away from it, and that it would be either a blessing or a bane for vast epochs of time. On the whole it would seem likely to increase his feeling of responsibility, and to stimulate a desire to learn more of what has been taught by the higher of the sons of men about deep and apparently eternal things. Apart from controversy, the religion of English-speaking communities is Christianity, and Christianity has been described as not so much a doctrine as a life. It is both ; but, at any rate, it is a very human form of religion, and has a strong practical bearing. Will an assured scientific knowledge of survival, when it comes, have anything to say about Christianity ? Undoubtedly it will. It will make its doctrinal acceptance in many ways much easier. The continued existence and activity of the Redeemer will follow almost as a matter of course. The episode of Incarnation which made the demonstration possible will be always historically important ; but its contemplation will be illuminated and completed by the continued action of the Divine Spirit down the ages.

So much has been written about the resurrection of the Central Figure of Christianity that it has become almost tiresome. It is seldom contemplated from the entirely human point of view. It is treated as miraculous and exceptional ; and the survival is supposed to be demonstrated by an empty tomb, as well as by the forty-day appearances. Clerical authorities may be right in contending for a special and exceptional treatment of that one material body : it may be a true instinct which impels them to lay stress on the disappearance of the corpse.

But that kind of resurrection is not essential to continued existence, and is not representative of our own immaterial survival. There will be no empty tomb in our case ; at least not until we have progressed immeasurably higher as a race. Even that may come. Who is to say ? The Gospel occurrence may be an anticipation of something latent in the relation between mind and matter, which only an exceptionally lofty personality can make effective. This may be the full significance of the phrase, "The first fruits of them that slept" ; which otherwise seems inapplicable. But still, even as regards that Central Figure of the Gospels, surely the continuance of activity, here and now and always, is more important than the particular method by which that continuity was secured. The method is of intense interest, but not so essential. The more essential truth is that contained in such sentences as "He ever liveth to make intercession for us ;" and again, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Even so we shall live and work also. Our birth may be "a sleep and a forgetting," but not our death. Death releases us from the barrier of the flesh, introduces us to the glorious company of those who have gone before, and opens out a majestic vista of love and service.

A SHORT SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH CONSISTENT
WITH THE PRECEDING.

THE essential doctrines of Christianity surely are the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, The two great commandments of the Law are, we are authoritatively told, the love of God and the

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love of neighbour. These have never been repealed and never will be. Consider the simpler first.

Love of neighbour leads to practical religion. It has given rise to many brotherhoods of artisans for mutual help. These are on the lines of true Christian fellowship. They hold out a helping hand to each other, they seek to aid their members, and they sympathise with distress—indeed, they take steps to remedy it. We all keenly appreciate brotherly kindness and sympathy ; it always leads to understanding and active help, it cultivates and emphasises the natural virtues, Members of a brotherhood find no difficulty in keeping their hands from picking and stealing, nor their tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. Their hands are often in their own pockets, kindly words are often on their tongue, scandal and backbiting are abhorrent. Even at school we do not tell tales about our neighbour. Whatever our failings may be—and doubtless we have many—we have the same hatred of cruelty and injustice that Christ had. Some sins he regarded as pardonable. The sins which he was most specially down upon, those that aroused his deepest indignation and direct curses, are just those that we ourselves abhor. All our corporate brotherly kindness is directed against them.

If only this Second Commandment of love to our neighbour could be introduced into the world broadcast, what a simplification it would be. There would be no more crime ; no one would seek to injure another. Love is a fulfilling of the law. And if it could be extended to international relations

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(for in these days of easy communication nations are perforce much more neighbourly than they ever have been before), international enmity would cease too. The prosperity of each would be the benefit of all. Success in scientific discovery is even now heartily welcomed by the scientific workers of all other nations. Friendliness in some departments has already begun: it has only got to extend. Already there is the beginning of an international parliament at Geneva—"a beam in darkness, let it grow." It rests with us of each generation whether we cultivate and encourage this friendly machinery for discussing and trying to realise what will be for the good of the whole community. Not, as formerly, for the benefit of one family, one tribe, one section, one nation alone, but for the whole race of man on this planet. We have only with all our force to encourage that aim, and God's Kingdom will surely come. When humanity is united in the bonds of brotherly love, God's will will be done on earth by the free agents whom He has brought into being. There will be no more rebellion. We shall realise that His service is the only perfect freedom.

But now a word about the First Commandment. How can we feel a love for God? Is it not presumptuous? It would be, did we not occasionally realise His love for us. We do not always realise it, but it comes over us occasionally, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another. Every now and then we recognise the extraordinary care taken of our dwelling-place, its amazing beauty and adaptation, its fitness for human habitation. Everything seems so beautifully designed. We take a lot of

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things for granted, because we are so used to them ; but things might have been so different. The very sunlight is filtered by a recently discovered layer of ozone in the upper atmosphere, so that the deleterious rays of the sun are screened from us, and we only get those that are beneficial. Tons of water are up in the clouds, and might be a danger ; but the atmosphere makes it come down in gentle drops. Sunshine and showers are trivial instances ; even the animals (as Myers says) "Obscurely sentient, blindly glad, feel the dim lust of shower and shine." But we can go further—especially those trained in science—we find beauty and adaptation permeating everything. These and many other experiences appeal to some of us as a sign of loving care, and have led us to feel through our innermost being, in our bones so to speak, that "the great heart of existence is most wonderfully kind."

Things are not yet perfect ! No, not yet. Evolution has gone far, but has not attained completeness. The unconscious has had its day and done its work ; now at length *we* enter on the terrestrial scene, and humanity begins its task. The remaining imperfections are mainly such as can come within our own control, if we choose to exert ourselves. We ought to be able to manage the outstanding ravages, say, of insects and of disease. Floods and famines can be guarded against. The management of the earth is largely given into our hands. "The earth He hath given to the children of men."

It is no time for ignorance and supineness ; the necessary learning and effort are good for us. We

could accomplish our task if only we cease from quarrelling and attend to things of real importance. If people were always striving to do their best, both as individuals and as communities, their failures might be regarded with a lenient eye, like the mistakes of a child ; and the love of the Father would be natural enough.

But we have to admit that both individuals and nations often rebel and go astray and act abominably. How is it possible for a rebellious and troublesome son to be surrounded by the love of a father ? Well, think of Absalom. He had rebelled, he had done everything he could think of to alienate and dishonour his father, he had insulted him grievously, and now had taken up arms and was in the field, presumably to seize the throne for himself. He seems to have been an instrument for inflicting divine chastisement upon his unfortunate and long-suffering and repentant father, David. Yet he was loved; and when at the end he was slain in battle, his death was lamented with an eloquence that sounds down the ages : "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son !"

Aye, has not this ejaculation rung true in many a parent's heart during the Great War ? Can we imagine the love of God for us like that ? We are constrained to recognise the love of Christ. As he mourned over Jerusalem, where the ecclesiastics were already plotting his death—"if thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace"—so we can picture him stretching out his hands even to us and saying,

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“O, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee ! ” And then we remember that he actually did die for us. He did all that was possible to help free responsible creatures, if only they would respond. He revealed to us the human aspect of the Godhead, just as the sunshine is the human aspect of the sun. As the Son of Man he showed us a Divine Spirit full of human kindness.

Well, that is the conception of the Godhead to which I have been led by a study of science in its wider aspects ; Christ revealed God to us on earth, as the sunshine reveals the sun. The parable will bear pressing. In spite of our ignorance and perplexities, the outcome of all my studies is the simple but assured conviction that “The Great Heart of Existence is most wonderfully kind.”

The Attitude of the London Spiritualist Alliance towards Spiritualism and Psychical Research.

- (1) There is one belief common to all Spiritualists, no matter how widely they may differ concerning the various issues involved, that is, a belief in the Survival of Human Personality after Bodily Death and its demonstration.
- (2) The Alliance regards Survival as a fact in Nature.
- (3) It recognises that the inferences arising from this fact are scientific, philosophical and religious.
- (4) It affirms that serious experimentation should be encouraged, but deprecates unscientific and aimless pursuit of phenomena as an end in itself.
- (5) It looks upon psychic phenomena as the "pre-
amble to all religions" (F. W. H. Myers), and not in themselves the basis for a New Religion.
- (6) It realises that while some psychic phenomena emanate from the discarnate, others do not.
- (7) It recommends that every communication be subjected to critical examination.

